

By "SPOT KICK" : Wycombe W. 1, Ilford 3

TO mark Wanderers' first title win for 14 years, 'Mid-week' invited "SPOT-KICK", who reported the 1956-57 campaign, to make a special return to the 'Free Press' sports pages. Here is his account of a match which didn't exactly see Wanderers "turn it on" in championship style.

"WE are the champions," chanted Wycombe supporters before, during and after the Wanderers' last Isthmian League game of the season at Loakes Park on Saturday — the game that called for a showpiece display to celebrate the Blues' first Isthmian title triumph since 1957.

A note of anticipatory relish characterised the chanting before the match, but it soon changed to a note of defiance as the Wanderers floundered.

For Wycombe looked anything but champions in this disappointing game. Starting with a proud flourish, they wilted as purposeful Ilford gratefully accepted two gift goals in the first 15 minutes. And they finally gave the visitors best with an air of "Well it didn't matter anyway."

Ilford had perhaps the greater incentive. They played the more positive football and well deserved to achieve their ambition — to take both away points from all the clubs above them in the Isthmian table.

Wycombe, at any rate, created history of a kind by virtually scoring all four goals — and still losing 3-1. For all the Ilford goals came from grotesque home defensive blunders that screamed for punishment, and got it.

It was an unhappy day for the Wycombe defence altogether, and none worse than for Keith Blunt, in his farewell League performance. He could do little right and conceded two of the goals before relinquishing his place with a wry grin in the

second half to substitute Johnny Hutchinson.

Blunt began the slide for Wycombe within ten minutes of the start with a hurried pass back which eluded Maskell and found the back of the net, to the home crowd's horror and Ilford's delight.

Then, five minutes later, Maskell fumbled an easy corner-kick from Tate and presented the vigilant Drabwell with a second "gift".

The championship chanting was muted as Ilford warmed to their luck and dictated the play, with Maskell and the home backs — puzzled by the vagaries of the flighty breeze — juggled uncertainly with the lively marksmanship of Tate, Drabwell and Howard. Only the phlegmatic Powell inspired confidence for Wycombe.

It was left to volatile Tony Horseman to revive flagging Wycombe spirits just before half-time with a brilliantly placed shot from a free kick just outside the penalty area.

While Wycombe were way below their best, with only Pritchard and Horseman making much headway up front against a close packed Ilford defence, it still looked odds on at that stage that the Wanderers would use the second half advantage of the wind to finish in triumph.

But that hope took a final blow 12 minutes after the resumption, when Blunt attempted another ill-advised pass back which merely presented Drabwell with another free goal.

For all the persistency of Horseman and Pritchard, the tireless constructive play of Powell and the rallying forays of battle-scarred skipper John Delaney, Wycombe never subsequently looked like turning the tables, though they monopolised the play towards the close.

Right-back Smith twice cleared off the goal-line in tearaway Wycombe attacks and Ilford's talented young goalkeeper James made several acrobatic saves to foil the champions' belated bid to justify their fans' hopes of an appropriate climax.

But at the close, as Delaney led his men back onto the field to drink to championship success in champagne, there were no reservations in the jubilant acclaim hundreds of supporters gave the team — and to Delaney himself, who was hoisted into the air and carried in celebration before the stand, still balancing his champagne glass precariously.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: J. Maskell, K. Blunt, (Sub: J. Hutchinson, 78 mins.), I. Rundle, E. Powell, J. Delaney, B. Bremer, G. Anthony, B. Baker, K. Searle, L. Pritchard, A. Horseman.

ILFORD: P. James, D. Collins, D. Guiver, J. Smith, P. Anderson, B. Jackson, D. Field, M. Tate, D. Drabwell, J. Morgan, T. Howard.
Referee: K. A. Duff (West Molesey).

Official Paying Attendance: 2,528.